

Applicant contact information: Jeff Benoit, President, Restore America's Estuaries
jbenoit@estuaries.org 703-524-0248 x1 2300 Clarendon Blvd, Ste. 603, Arlington, VA 22201

TITLE: Support of the Southeast New England Program (SNEP) Goals for Coastal Watershed Restoration

Program Description

It is well recognized that excess nitrogen is one of the greatest threats to the health of Southern New England coastal and estuarine waters. To address this threat, Restore America's Estuaries (RAE) hereby proposes to administer a program that advances the priorities of the Southern New England Program (SNEP) of the EPA and brings about impactful watershed restoration results. Through this program RAE will fund projects that support SNEP's priorities: reduce impacts of nutrients, especially nitrogen, on aquatic life and coastal ecosystems; restore physical processes that support critical habitat and ecosystem function; and measure, monitor, and report change in condition and the effectiveness of actions through projects and partnerships. In addition, it is our intent to build support and strengthen the regional identity of SNEP, beyond just a grants program, as a forward-looking program of partnerships that achieves on-the-ground environmental results, modeled after the success of the Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund (TBERF).

In close collaboration with EPA, RAE will design and administer this program to support progress toward the EPA Strategic Plan Goal 2: "Protect and Restore Watersheds and Aquatic Ecosystems: Protect, restore, and sustain the quality of rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands on a watershed basis, and sustainably manage and protect coastal and ocean resources and ecosystems," as indicated by quantifiable progress toward the Strategic Measures of "Improve Water Quality on a Watershed Basis" and "Improve Coastal and Ocean Waters." RAE will do this by creating a competitive subaward program, through which eligible organizations may request funds to conduct restoration and conservation activities to address the SNEP priorities.

RAE will work with EPA to build on the previous efforts of SNEP and create an ecosystem-scale, multi-stakeholder strategy to guide this program. Using this strategy to inform creation and management of the subaward grant program will ensure that projects selected as subawardees advance SNEP's stated priorities and produce results that are carefully measured, monitored, and reported upon.

RAE will collaborate with EPA to draft a Request For Proposals (RFP) seeking applicants for subawards of up to \$750,000. The RFP will include information on the specific SNEP priorities that we seek to address through this program, and will require applicants to detail how their proposed project will address one or more of the SNEP priorities listed above.

The RFP will require applicants to submit detailed information on project goals, objectives, activities, expected outcomes/outputs, and plans for monitoring and measuring the success of their project. Detailed expense budgets will be required. Subaward recipients will be required to provide matching funds of at least 33%; the RFP will therefore require them to list sources and amounts of funds that will be used as match. The RFP will request pre-proposals be submitted first, to allow for more efficient review of the initial pool of applications as well as to prevent groups from wasting excessive time on full proposals that will not be funded.

RAE will establish a selection committee consisting of 7 to 10 representatives from local/regional agencies (e.g. EPA, Rhode Island DEP, NRCS, and Mass. Coastal Zone Management) and NGOs, plus representation from RAE and SNEP committees. We will wait until after the pre-proposal deadline to invite the local government and NGO representatives to join the committee to allow us to reach out to representatives whose organizations are not applying for subawards. By so doing, we will add representatives to the committee with strong familiarity with local conditions, challenges, and stakeholders as well as diverse perspectives on these.

The selection committee will review pre-proposals, and invite full proposals from applicants whose proposed projects best address the SNEP priorities. The selection committee will then meet in person to evaluate and score proposals. RAE will work with SNEP to develop scoring criteria and a score sheet, and a methodology for applying criteria. Members of the selection committee will be instructed to strictly follow this methodology in evaluating proposals. Scoring criteria will include additional points awarded for availability of matching funds beyond the minimum requirement. Discussion of projects' strengths and weaknesses will be encouraged at the selection committee meeting, though discussion of rankings will not be permitted. Committee members will be asked to recuse themselves during discussion of projects from organizations with whom they have a potential conflict of interest. Each committee member will score applicants, and ranks will be averaged (omitting highest and lowest scores for each project) to determine which projects will receive awards.

RAE will further work, in collaboration with EPA, to develop and enhance the "brand" and identity of SNEP by building momentum for and recognition of its work to restore the watershed. By so doing, we will increase sense of connectedness among stakeholders, practitioners, and the general public as well as awareness of the impact that SNEP's support of restoration is having on the region's environment, economy, and quality of life. This branding effort will entail creation of web pages, strategic use of social media and other electronic communications, outreach to traditional and "new" media, and outreach by partner and ally organizations. We will also create a program logo to be used in RFPs, on letterhead for official correspondence, on websites, and in electronic communications, to further build awareness and recognition of the program's watershed-based reach, impact, and importance.

Schedule

The below schedule for program activities is based upon the dates in the RFA, with applicant notification by 7/17/17, award start date of 10/1/17, completion of subaward projects at least six months before the end of the SNEP program period, and completion of all work and deliverables by the program end date. This schedule aligns tasks to facilitate the achievement of the program's goals and objectives by the program's end date, as well as to allow for collaboration around important steps. The first schedule below is for work under FY17 funding of the partnership agreement. If funding is made available for the additional years, the timeline for activities under that funding is included below. This program will be designed to allow for creation of strategy, program design, and the announcing of the first round of subawards to occur within the first six months, with the first round of projects to be completed within the first 18 months, and a final program report completed and results disseminated both regionally and nationally within 24 months. Should additional funding be made available beyond the first year, RAE would work in close collaboration with SNEP to build upon strategies and processes already in place to administer additional years, depending on funding and timing.

SCHEDULE FOR ACTIVITIES UNDER INITIAL AGREEMENT PERIOD (YEARS 1&2)

PROGRAM ACTIVITY	EXPECTED COMPLETION
Create regional restoration strategy w/EPA	October 2017
Issue and distribute final RFP	November 2017
Pre-Proposals due to RAE	December 2017
Creation of selection committee	December 2017
Full Proposals due to RAE (by invitation only)	January 2018
Meeting of selection committee	February 2018
Awards announced	February 2018
Review of subawardee quarterly reports	June, September, December 2018
Subawardee workshop	September 2018
Information dissemination at RAE National Summit	December 2018
SNEP Partnership and Technology Transfer meeting	March 2019
Final subawardee reports due	May 2019
Publication of final report on initial period of overall program	September 2019

SCHEDULE FOR ACTIVITIES UNDER EXTENDED AGREEMENT (IF ADDITIONAL FUNDING RECEIVED)

**dates estimated: subject to funding availability and timing*

PROGRAM ACTIVITY	EXPECTED COMPLETION
Issue RFP	Q4 2018, 2019
Pre-Proposals due to RAE	Q1 2019, 2020
Creation of selection committee	Q1 2019, 2020
Full Proposals due to RAE (by invitation only)	Q1 2019, 2020
Meeting of selection committee	Q1 2019, 2020
Awards announced	Q2 2019, 2020
Review of subawardee quarterly reports	Q3, Q4 2019, Q1 2020; Q3, Q4 2020, Q1 2021
Subawardee workshop	Q4 2019, 2020
SNEP Partnership and Technology Transfer meetings	Q2 2020, 2021
Final subawardee reports due	Q3 2020, 2021
Information dissemination via national webinar	Q3 2020, 2021
Information dissemination at RAE National Summit	Q4 2020
Publication of final reports on program	Q2 2021, 2022

Addressing challenges

RAE's experience in leading other subaward programs (e.g. NOAA CRP, TBERF, etc.) and our familiarity with local and national conditions will inform our decision-making regarding how we address challenges/changes. As such situations arise, we will work in close consultation with EPA, subawardee(s), and/or the project selection committee to determine the appropriate course of action.

RAE will foster collaboration among subawardees, particularly through annual workshops to be held six months after announcement of subawards. Subawardees will be required to attend these workshops, at which subawardees will share information with each other on lessons learned and best practices, thereby helping subawardees overcome challenges they are facing and facilitating future communication to help address other challenges that may arise.

Environmental Results

RAE will measure, monitor, and report outputs and outcomes on two levels: 1) the subaward level, and 2) the assistance agreement project level. At the subaward level, the RFP will specifically seek projects which address the SNEP priorities, and the scoring criteria

will evaluate projects based on the extent to which they address these. Proposals will be required to list target outputs/outcomes and metrics by which success in achieving these will be measured. Subawardees will be required to submit quarterly reports in which they detail their progress and results in bringing about these outcomes. Payment of subawards will be done by reimbursement, with payment contingent on the submission of reports on a timely basis. Subaward recipients will be required to submit final reports within one month of project completion date, including final measurable results toward proposed outputs and outcomes.

RAE will monitor subawardees' progress toward proposed outputs and outcomes through periodic site visits and through regular communication with subawardees. Subawardees will be required to participate in a workshop held approximately six months after award date to share their progress, best practices, and lessons learned, and to discuss any challenges they have encountered. Such interaction among subawardees helps build a meaningful network, fosters collaboration, and strengthens a sense of connectedness within the watershed. Additionally, subawardees will participate in an annual daylong partnership and technology transfer meeting with members of SNEP committee and other stakeholders. At this event, they will report out on their work including proposed vs. achieved results.

At the assistance agreement project level, the following outputs, outcomes, and measures will be monitored and reported upon:

Outputs

Outputs of the program will include:

- List of subaward recipients;
Measure: List published in easily-used and -read formatted spreadsheets or other similar electronic tool.
- Online or electronic grant management system(e.g., tools for subaward applicants to apply; for review teams to read and rank subaward applicants);
Measure: Successful implementation of tailored grant management tool.
- Partnerships formed or strengthened that contribute to measurably reduced nutrient impacts and improved or restored aquatic ecosystems;
Measure: Number of partnerships formed or strengthened.
- Restoration and conservation practices implemented that preserve or restore connectivity and/or support natural ecosystem and watershed processes;
Measures:
 - Numbers of acres and/or miles restored and/or conserved.
 - Number of restoration and conservation practices implemented.
- Restoration, watershed, and/or land use plans designed, developed, and/or implemented;
Measure: Number of restoration, watershed, and/or land use plans designed, developed, and/or implemented.
- Plans for testing and implementing approaches, and for sharing and adopting successful outcomes, lessons learned, technologies developed, approaches gleaned, and best practices employed from the projects;
Measures:
 - Number of tested and/or implemented plans documented.
 - Number of dissemination techniques used for sharing information.
- Development of databases of regional data such as precipitation, streamflow and volume, nutrient concentrations and discharge information, and land-use nutrient loadings to enable targeted action;
Measure: Creation of regional database(s).
- Criteria and methods for evaluating and tracking success and sustainability of actions implemented through projects;
Measure: Documentation of criteria and methods used.
- Convene Annual SNEP Partnership and Technology Transfer meeting.
Measure: Publication of report summary for annual meeting.

Outcomes

Outcomes of the program will include:

- Creation of sustainable partnerships and/or other management collaboratives to operate across the SNEP region;
Measure: Number of sustainable partnerships or other management collaborations.
- Changes made to regulations, codes, and/or ordinances to promote watershed-based management;
Measure: Number of changes made to regulations, codes, and/or ordinances to promote watershed-based management.
- Implementation of innovative watershed-based nutrient reduction strategies;
Measure: Number of innovative watershed-based nutrient reduction strategies implemented.
- Deployment of shared monitoring protocols, data, and reporting networks;
Measure: Number of shared monitoring protocols, data, and reporting networks deployed.
- Improved capacity among state and local governments to finance, implement, and monitor regionally scaled habitat projects;
Measure: Number of stories of change in capacity.
- Improved collective knowledge about how the physical processes of SNEP watersheds have improved, resulting in reduction in the amount of nutrients discharged in SNEP watersheds and an improvement in the ecosystem services and functions of SNEP watersheds;
Measure: Amount of reduction of nutrients discharged to SNEP watersheds.
- Recovery of healthy aquatic life in nearby surface waters based on before- and after-project measurements;
Measure: Improvements to targeted aquatic life in surface waters.
- Cost savings resulting from project implementation.
Measure: Number of projects that remediate nutrient pollution and reduce/eliminate long-term maintenance and/or lost use costs.

Monitoring progress

RAE will monitor and track our progress toward each of the outputs and outcomes listed above monthly to inform the ongoing conversations we will have with EPA around our progress as well as the quarterly programmatic reports we will be submitting to EPA.

Reporting progress

RAE will submit to EPA quarterly programmatic and financial reports detailing progress toward the outputs and outcomes above. Results will be shared and discussed during annual SNEP partnership and technology transfer meetings to include subaward recipients, selection committee, and/or additional representatives from SNEP/EPA. RAE will also maintain regular communication with EPA around progress of projects and overall program.

Local environmental challenges

The SNEP coastal watershed is a complex region with land uses that include urban/ industrial cities, agricultural lands (e.g., cranberry bogs), and older developed, and sometimes densely clustered, communities. Associated with these land uses come aging municipal wastewater infrastructure, stormwater and agricultural runoff, and inadequate ("failing") onsite individual wastewater treatment systems. Resulting environmental impacts to the rivers and coastal waters of the watershed include excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorous) and high levels of bacteria (atmospheric deposition of nitrogen is also recognized as a source to coastal waters, contributing 15% or less of total nitrogen loading). Compounding the problem is the Narragansett Bay and Buzzards Bay coastline of the SNEP watershed is a highly irregular configuration with numerous embayments that have restricted or only intermittent openings and are poorly flushed. Similarly, many of the harbors and bays along the south shore of Cape Cod and the islands within the SNEP region are also poorly flushed. Excess nitrogen in these coastal waters triggers the growth of algae, reducing dissolved oxygen and decreasing water clarity. As the quality of the water degrades, living resources, especially eelgrass, are susceptible and begin to die off. In turn, many fish and shellfish that rely on the eelgrass for food and shelter begin to disappear. Similar occurrences in the freshwater rivers, streams, or ponds in the SNEP watershed are triggered by excess phosphorous entering the waterbodies. ***Excess nutrients entering poorly flushed waters is a significant environmental challenge of local impact, and one that is pervasive across the SNEP region.***

The impacts from excess nutrients described above are visual representations of the impacts occurring to ecosystem services and functions. Ecosystem services are the direct or indirect positive benefits provided by the ecosystem to people. The healthier an ecosystem is, the better it functions at providing services and benefits to people. When resources within the ecosystem are degraded, the functions of those resources are diminished or lost, and the level of service is negatively impacted. How well living resources

within an ecosystem function determines the level or extent of the service being provided. There are many misconceptions about what constitutes an ecosystem service, but the key coastal and estuarine ecosystem services are: 1) fisheries; 2) habitat; 3) water filtration and purification; and 4) flood mitigation. There is interdependence between ecosystem functions, and between and across ecosystem services.

We propose that the best approach to face the environmental challenges stated above is to have subawardees develop projects that target: a) habitat, and b) water filtration and purification, as priority ecosystem services and the ecosystem functions provided by eelgrasses, shellfish, and saltmarsh. We will seek innovative approaches to restore/protect these vital resources.

Subawards

Seeking projects

There will be two components to how RAE will seek projects for subawards. First, RAE will utilize the general mailing lists and other contact information used by EPA and the Buzzards Bay and Narragansett Bay NEP's in the previous two rounds of SNEP solicitations. RAE will insure these contacts include the Selectmen/Mayors Office, Department of Health and/or Public Works, and Conservation Commissions of local municipalities. The second component will utilize the extensive network of organizations and partners that RAE has in the SNEP area to identify potential innovative or otherwise appropriate projects. RAE will reach out to such groups as Save The Sound, Narragansett Bay NEP, Narragansett Bay NERR, URI, Buzzards Bay NEP, Buzzards Bay Coalition, Cape Cod Commission, Waquoit Bay NERR, Association for the Preservation of Cape Cod, etc.

Selecting projects

All applications for subawards will be subject to a competitive selection process. RAE will build on and use a process similar to that used in SNEP rounds 1 and 2. Working with EPA, RAE will develop criteria to rank projects, use an independent selection committee to review and rank projects, and select projects based on the reviews and rankings. RAE will include as part of the subaward award selection criteria the potential for replication locally, regionally, and/or nationally. Using the findings, lessons learned, and best practices from selected projects to inform other restoration projects will allow RAE to leverage this funding to create significant impacts on coastal ecosystems in years and geographic areas beyond the range of this program.

Overseeing projects

RAE will maintain regular communication with subawardees to monitor progress, as well as to discuss any challenges faced by and/or changes to projects. Subawardees will submit quarterly reports on projects, which RAE will review to assess progress. Subawardees will be required to attend a workshop approximately six months after subaward award date to discuss with other subawardees, and/or RAE and EPA, their progress, challenges, and lessons learned.

RAE will use grant-management software to organize, streamline, and maximize efficiency and effectiveness of processes for subaward application submission, application management, application review and project selection, and subaward management.

Transferability of Results

It is of high importance that results, best practices, and lessons learned from this program be captured and shared to inform future restoration efforts within the watershed and beyond. Subaward recipients will be required to submit final reports providing measurable outputs/outcomes, anecdotal information on process and results, and financial information. Subaward recipients will also be required to provide quarterly updates with this information. Further, in-person workshops for subawardees will be held 6 months after subaward dates to share information on their progress as well as any challenges and/or changes to their project. Additionally, approximately one year after award date subawardees will participate in regional SNEP partnership and technology transfer meetings with the project selection committee, representatives from EPA and other agencies, and other stakeholders to share information on their process and results to inform other efforts and encourage restoration. Data gathered through reports, meetings, and workshops will be used to create a report on the overall program. The report will be disseminated to program participants, agencies, partner organizations, resource managers, and other stakeholders both within the SNEP watershed and nationally.

Outside of the SNEP region, RAE's strength in convening diverse stakeholders will allow for broad dissemination of lessons and results with stakeholders, practitioners, and decision makers nationwide. RAE will leverage the attendance, expected to be 1,200+, and infrastructure of our biennial National Summit on Coastal Restoration and Management, scheduled for December 8–13 2018 in Long Beach, CA, to share lessons and results with attendees representing a diverse array of sectors including nonprofit, tribal, corporate, government, and academic. Lessons and results from this program will be disseminated via a dedicated session at the Summit.

Information will also be disseminated via RAE's network of member groups, consisting of ten community-based coastal restoration organizations around the country, and other partner organizations. The final program report will be shared electronically with RAE's members and partner organizations, and RAE will host one or more webinars to provide additional information on this program.

Programmatic Capability and Environmental Results

Restore America's Estuaries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of bays and estuaries as essential resources for our nation. RAE has experience successfully managing similar programs, has a network of partners and allies in the

Southern New England region, and possesses a good deal of familiarity with the unique institutional, historical, and environmental conditions in the area. RAE is a recognized leader in developing innovative approaches to coastal restoration and management. For example, since 2010 RAE has led the national effort for developing Blue Carbon science and application, demonstrating success in advancing innovative science-based solutions to offset changing environmental factors affecting our coasts and eventually bringing private sector funding to support large-scale habitat restoration of saltmarsh and eelgrass. RAE will promote innovation and inspire new collaborations to advance protection and restoration of the SNEP watershed.

RAE has strong ties to the SNEP program area. Jeff Benoit, RAE President, began his career working in the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Program and Coastal Zone Management Program and has personally visited most of the coastal portion of the SNEP watershed in Massachusetts. Our member organization **Save The Bay – Narragansett Bay** is located in the region and is a leader in regional restoration efforts. Save The Bay's President, Jonathan Stone, recently completed (in early 2017) a two-year term as Chair of RAE's Board of Directors. We also have relationships with other organizations in the area, including **The Nature Conservancy**, **Buzzard's Bay National Estuary Program**, and **Narragansett Bay National Estuary Program**. We will leverage these connections to expand our network in the area to inform the creation of the RFP and the selection committee.

RAE has strong experience and expertise in administering comparable programs, and in conducting outreach with diverse stakeholders regarding important restoration and conservation issues. Our most relevant experience is in our longstanding and successful partnership with NOAA's Restoration Center (RC). RAE has successfully managed the financial and administrative aspects of our partnership with NOAA RC for the last ten years, during which time NOAA RC's contribution to this partnership has been \$14.6 million. RAE's management of this partnership's financial and administrative aspects has included contracting with subawardees, maintaining project files, preparing/submitting timely financial and programmatic reports, obtaining copies of permits and consultations, and documenting project match. RAE's annual auditors have repeatedly found RAE's financial systems to be sound.

Under our agreement with NOAA RC, RAE, RAE's member groups, and NOAA RC design and implement restoration projects that are selected for funding under the terms of this agreement. Project design and implementation include community participation and collaboration with various partners. RAE drafts and signs contracts with RAE member organizations after approving individual projects, and carries out all financial, administrative, and contractual aspects of subawards consistent with all applicable federal regulations, Department of Commerce/NOAA Fisheries policies and procedures, and RAE protocols. Additionally, RAE ensures that implementation of projects meets all state environmental laws and federal consistency requirements by obtaining applicable permits and consultations. RAE obtains written verification from NOAA RC that the NEPA process has been completed prior to allowing expenditure of construction funds. RAE also maintains copies in its offices of all required permits and consultations. RAE and its member organizations have a proven ability to match federal dollars for restoration projects. Since 2000, RAE has matched the NOAA RC's partnership contribution of \$14.6 million with more than \$15 million in project-related matching costs, over a 1:1 ratio. RAE and its member organizations are committed to providing a minimum 1:1 non-federal match in the renewed three-year partnership.

RAE also has relevant experience via our successful co-management of a program that supports on-the-ground restoration in a defined geographic area: the Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund. TBERF is a competitive grants program that funds projects which restore and protect Tampa Bay and its watershed. It is managed through a partnership between the Tampa Bay Estuary Program (TBEP) and RAE. RAE's administration of TBERF includes: drafting and issuing an RFP, including scoring criteria, seeking projects that will advance the priorities of the Tampa Bay Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan; participating in and overseeing a selection committee to determine which applicants should receive subawards; managing financial and administrative aspects of the program; and monitoring subawardees' progress toward goals and project results via formal grant reports and written and verbal project updates. TBERF subawardees are required to provide matching funds of at least 1:1; RAE ensures that subawardees comply with this requirement. In the three years RAE has co-managed TBERF, the program has awarded more than \$2 million in subawards to more than 20 projects.

RAE possesses the travel capacity to effectively oversee and administer the SNEP subward program and to disseminate the results on both regional and national scales. RAE's Program Coordinator will be based in Southern New England to conduct local outreach, coordination, and oversight. This person will be supervised by RAE's President, Jeff Benoit, who works out of RAE's headquarters in Arlington, VA, from which he can easily travel to the program area.

Outreach experience

In addition to our experience via TBERF and NOAA's RC in managing financial, administrative, programmatic, measuring, monitoring, and reporting components of large pots of funding to be administered for on-the-ground restoration by means of competitive application processes, RAE is also skilled and experienced at conducting diverse types of outreach at various scales. RAE has extensive experience in disseminating information and convening stakeholders around topics of regional importance. Examples of our success in conducting such outreach include hosting the 2016 Latitude 41 Regional Nitrogen Reduction Symposium in Stony Brook, NY; hosting the 1st National Living Shorelines Technology Transfer Meeting and Regional Workshops in Hartford, CT, in 2015; hosting the 2013 Mid-Atlantic Living Shorelines Summit in Cambridge, MD; and hosting several regional "Blue Carbon" workshops each year throughout the country.

RAE is well-renowned for our ability to convene key stakeholders and decisionmakers from around the country to share information on important restoration issues. This is most evident through our biennial National Summit. Our most recent one, RAE's 8th National Summit, was in New Orleans in December 2016. This event attracted more than 1,200 participants and more than 200 partners, sponsors, and exhibitors, and included 550 oral presentations in 110 sessions and 7 workshops and trainings. Our next Summit will be in December 2018 in Long Beach, CA. We also host several webinars per year on various topics to allow for national sharing of information, and have published reports in recent years which have been distributed nationally and covered relevant restoration topics such as Blue Carbon assessments, institutional barriers to living shorelines implementation, and the economic impact of restoration.

Organizational familiarity with the institutional and historical conditions of the region

RAE will bring to the administration of this program familiarity with both the institutional and historical conditions of the region as well as with the specific factors related to the impact of nitrogen pollution on water quality in the region. The SNEP region is complex in many ways, not least of which is the geopolitical setting and differences in governmental framework. It is the complexity and lack of "connectedness" of this framework that presents one of the impediments to collaboration and regional approaches for watershed issues that transcend political and governmental boundaries. The SNEP watershed region crosses two states both of which have their own set of environmental standards and regulations, has in excess of 100 municipalities, most of which have their own local form of government and budgets, and includes the remote islands of Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Block Island and the Elizabeth Islands. In Massachusetts there is also an additional overlay of County governments that have their own government structure and capacities. This in itself makes it difficult to foster collaboration and partnerships at the governmental level, which is a critical player.

The other impediment is insufficient funds to tackle the problems in a holistic and sustainable way. For example, efforts to establish TMDL's for impaired embayments within the SNEP region has been slowed because of cost for their development. It is difficult for the states (RI and MA) to fully carry the costs associated with developing TMDL's and EPA has limited grant resources available to assist the states. In addition, the development and implementation of other nutrient management BMP's can be costly for the states or municipalities to install and maintain.

An example of how important regional "connectedness" and funding are to achieving progress on nutrient (nitrogen) management is to look at where these impediments have been overcome, the Cape Cod 208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan Update approved by EPA in 2015. This regional, watershed-based plan was achievable because: a) it was developed by the Cape Cod Commission, a county-wide regional land use planning and regulatory agency representing the 15 individual towns of the Cape; and b) dedicated funds were committed to support the public outreach and technical requirements needed to develop the plan.

Organizational familiarity with subject matter

RAE has extensive experience with the issue of reducing nitrogen loading to coastal waters, particularly with using the power of convening to foster dialogue and consensus around innovative financial and technical solutions. For example, in 2016, RAE hosted a regional symposium in Stony Brook, NY, about ways to advance nitrogen reduction in Long Island Sound, the Peconic Estuary, and the South Shore Bays. The Latitude 41 Nitrogen Reduction Regional Symposium provided a forum more than 150 leaders from municipal and county governments, conservation and environmental groups, and private foundations to hear from experts who shared their experience with the science and practice of reducing nutrient pollution. The symposium highlighted the development of nitrogen reduction targets in watersheds, their limitations and strengths, and how they can be implemented and monitored.

Highlights from the symposium included:

- The latest science associated with nitrogen reduction targets, thresholds, estuarine endpoints and other aspects of TMDL-lite approaches.
- Discussion and explanation of opportunities and constraints with using targets and endpoints for management of nitrogen pollution.
- A focus on the role of local municipalities in watershed planning, funding and implementation efforts.
- Presentations about successful nutrient reduction programs across the region and elsewhere.
- Case studies focusing on nutrient pollution in waters along Long Island and Connecticut, and potential approaches to preventing pollution and restoring water quality.
- Identification of capacity and funding needs of local and state municipalities for nitrogen reduction implementation actions.
- Identification of possible next steps and additional actions to keep communication flowing about nitrogen pollution.

Qualifications of staff

Beyond this organizational knowledge of the region's issues and conditions, the people RAE will have working on this program bring strong individual familiarity with these, as well. The staff assigned to this program will be:

- Jeff Benoit (RAE President) - Jeff will supervise the Project Coordinator, overseeing and supporting establishment, execution, and administration of this program. Jeff has been with RAE for 10 years and oversees all of RAE's strategic, programmatic, and administrative activities. In 2016, Jeff led planning and management for the Latitude 41 Regional Nitrogen Reduction Symposium. Jeff has over 28 years of experience and leadership in coastal management and marine

conservation. Jeff started his career with the Massachusetts Coastal Zone Management, first as a coastal geologist and then as Director. From 1993 to 2001 Jeff served as Director of NOAA's Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management where he had responsibility for the National Coastal Zone Management Program, National Estuarine Research Reserves, and National Marine Sanctuaries. Jeff earned a B.S. in Marine Geology from Southampton College and a Master's Degree in Geophysical Science from the Georgia Institute of Technology/Skidaway Institute of Oceanography.

- Elsa Carlisle Schwartz (RAE Sr. Director of Restoration & Administration) - Elsa will oversee financial management and support administration of this program. Elsa co-manages TBERF, overseeing strategic, programmatic, and administrative activities. Elsa has managed RAE's awards from NOAA's Fisheries Conservation Program, through which RAE has awarded and administered more than \$10 million in subawards to implement estuarine habitat restoration projects around the United States. Elsa has been with RAE since 2004, and has a Master's of Marine Affairs from the University of Washington.
- Leigh Habegger (RAE External Affairs Manager) - Leigh will lead national communications and dissemination of lessons and results for this program, and will support regional communications and information dissemination. Leigh leads RAE's communications efforts, and previously worked on New England coastal and fisheries issues as a private lobbyist and in the office of Congresswoman Chellie Pingree. Leigh gained initial familiarity with regional conditions and issues while obtaining her Master's Degree in Marine Affairs from the University of Rhode Island.
- Program Coordinator - Upon approval of funding, RAE will hire a Program Coordinator to lead administration and management of this program. To succeed in bringing about the desired outcomes, the Program Coordinator will be someone with both the skills to create and administer this program as well as local connections and familiarity with the unique conditions of the region. We therefore will hire for this position a well-connected, local person with relevant project management experience as well as in-depth subject matter knowledge. Position Description is attached.

To ensure that we select the best projects to fund via subawards, we will put in place a selection committee with strong knowledge of local issues and familiarity with key players in the region. As per above, we envision the committee consisting of 7 to 10 representatives from local agencies as well as local nonprofits.

Organizational resources

RAE is committed to providing this program the financial, personnel, and other resources necessary to successfully achieve its objectives. This commitment is reflected by the personnel that we will be assigning to it. The Program Coordinator will spend 100% of his/her time on this program. The Program Coordinator's work will be supervised by RAE's President and Chief Executive Officer, who will also have direct involvement in the creation, administration, and management of this program, as will RAE's Sr. Director of Restoration & Administration. RAE will also leverage our national network of members, partners, and allies.

Federally and non-federally funded assistance agreements

- NOAA Fisheries Conservation Program: NA10NMF4630090, 05/01/2010 – 04/30/2015, \$7,859,000

This was RAE's 4th cooperative partnership with the NOAA Community-based Restoration Program to administer subawards to implement estuarine habitat restoration projects in 11 major estuaries around the United States. Throughout the multi-year partnership RAE administered more than 115 subcontracts for restoration projects.

In the first year of this partnership, NOAA contributed \$2.845 million to support community-based habitat restoration projects and for RAE's management of the financial and administrative aspects of the partnership with NOAA RC and RAE's members, including contracting with subawardees, maintaining project files, preparing and submitting timely financial and programmatic reports, obtaining copies of permits and consultations, and documenting project match.

In the second year of the partnership, NOAA contributed \$2.856 million in federal dollars to support community-based habitat restoration projects, RAE's ongoing Blue Carbon work, the exploration of the Coastal Restoration Corps, and RAE's 5th National Conference, as well as RAE's continual project management and oversight.

In the third year of the partnership, NOAA contributed \$2.157 million in federal dollars to support community-based habitat restoration projects, RAE's ongoing Blue Carbon work, the production of the *More Habitat Means More Fish* report, an Estuary Restoration Act story map, and RAE's 6th National Conference, as well as RAE's continual project management and oversight.

- NOAA Fisheries: NA13NMF4630138, 8/01/2013 – 10/31/2017, \$2,668,317

"Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Restore America's Estuaries: Chesapeake Bay Reef Habitat Restoration Project." RAE is administering three subawards to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) (\$500,000; \$301,946; and \$306,371 for a total of \$1,108,317) to support a multi-faceted habitat-based restoration program that fosters species recovery and increased fish populations through the creation and restoration of oyster reefs in the Chesapeake Bay. This grant is also supporting RAE's Living Shorelines effort, education and outreach efforts, and RAE's Blue Carbon program.

- Tampa Bay Environmental Restoration Fund (2013 – Present)

TBERF is a competitive grants program that funds projects which restore and protect Tampa Bay and its watershed. It is managed through a strategic partnership between RAE and the Tampa Bay Estuary Program. To date, TBERF, and its predecessor the Tampa Bay Environmental Fund, has received more than \$2.4 million to support nearly 30 projects throughout the Tampa Bay watershed.

- University of Michigan Subcontract Issued under a Cooperative Agreement with NOAA

Coastal Zone Management Administration Award, 09/01/2015 – 08/31/2018, \$749,704

RAE is the fiscal agent for the grant and administers subcontracts to four entities for the project “Expanding Blue Carbon Implementation: Increasing GHG Model Application in Tidally Restricted and Restored Salt Marshes.” RAE holds primary responsibility for grant allocations, subawards, and expenditures, and oversees the timely completion of progress and final reports. RAE works closely with the Project Coordinator and with designated fiscal agents at each of the subcontracting organizations.

- Environmental Protection Agency Wetland Program: Cooperative Agreement 83578701

“Establishing an Online Living Shorelines Academy to Advance the Use of Living Shorelines”, 02/01/2015 – 1/31/2018, \$348,688

This project is developing and operating a Living Shorelines Academy that consists of an interactive web portal, regional training workshops, and a national technology transfer meeting. The Academy is operated by RAE and its member organizations in partnership with key federal, state and local agencies; academics; marine contractors; development and legal professionals; and landowners.

History of meeting reporting requirements

RAE has established a strong history of submitting accurate and high-quality programmatic and financial progress reports in a timely fashion. The NOAA and EPA grants detailed above have required programmatic and financial progress reports be submitted every 6 months; we have submitted these in a timely fashion. Final reports have been submitted for the NOAA 2010, 2011, and 2012 funding. Private sector TBERF funders require the submission of annual reports; RAE has submitted in-depth and accurate financial and programmatic reports in a timely fashion for each grant.

Organizational experience and plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives

As noted above, RAE has significant experience leading subaward programs and in not only using them to achieve restoration objectives but also in monitoring, measuring, and reporting our success in doing so. Further, RAE is well known for our ability to disseminate information both regionally and nationally to facilitate replication of successful projects.

RAE's plan for timely and successfully achieving the objectives of the proposed project will be built around clear communication of these objectives, establishment of quantifiable measures of progress toward them, and diligent monitoring and measuring of progress. By coordinating with EPA in the creation of a strategy for this program at its outset and crafting an RFP that closely aligns with this strategy, we will ensure that projects selected for funding advance progress toward these objectives. By making subawardee reimbursement contingent upon timely submission of quarterly reports detailing progress toward measurable results, we will ensure that these projects are bringing about their proposed outputs and outcomes.

Budget Narrative

RAE's budget is based on the awarding of FY17 funds in the amount of \$5 million, which will be expended over a two-year period. This budget is scalable to accommodate different award amounts. Future budgets, per the RFA, are subject to the availability of funds. These would likely be similar to, and would be informed by, the budget for FY17 awards. Funding for additional awards would be fully spent by the end of the project period for the cooperative agreement.

RAE's budget has been created to allow for efficient, effective administration of this program while ensuring a significant percentage of program funds remain available for subawards.

Personnel

RAE's Program Coordinator will administer this program on a full-time basis, will be located in the program area, and will be supervised by RAE's President, Jeff Benoit, who will assist in setting up and overseeing this program. RAE's Sr. Director of Restoration & Administration, Elsa Carlisle Schwartz, will oversee financial and administrative aspects of this work. RAE's External Affairs Manager, Leigh Habegger, will lead national communications efforts and national dissemination of lessons/results, and will support regional communications. Salary costs for Jeff, Elsa, and Leigh reflect a 3% cost-of-living salary increase in Year 2.

Travel

The budget supports local travel for Program Coordinator to meet with subawardees, selection committee members and other local partners, and to visit project sites for monitoring purposes. Non-local travel includes 3 trips for Jeff Benoit from RAE's Arlington, VA, headquarters to Rhode Island for program oversight, participation in subawardee meeting, and supervision of Program Coordinator. In Year 2, the budget includes 2 trips for Benoit to Rhode Island, to oversee program and/or participate in SNEP partners and technology transfer meeting. Non-local travel also includes 3 trips in Year 1 and 2 in Year 2 for Program Coordinator to RAE's headquarters to meet with Benoit, Habegger, and other staff for program development and management. Non-local travel further includes funds for Project Coordinator to attend RAE's National Summit on Coastal and Estuarine Restoration and Management, scheduled for

December 2018 in Long Beach, CA, to disseminate results and lessons learned from this project to a national audience of stakeholders, partners, and key decision makers.

Supplies

The Program Coordinator will work out of a home office. The budget therefore includes no funds for office space, but does include expenses for paper, ink, other office supplies, etc. in Years 1 and 2. Year 1 includes funds for purchase of a laptop computer to be used by the Program Coordinator.

Contractual

RAE will contract with a graphic designer to create a logo for the SNEP program in Year 1. RAE will contract with financial services consultants to complete an A-133 audit each year.

Other

Years 1 & 2 include telephone and IT expenses for the Program Coordinator's home office (Year 1 expenses include initial setup costs). RAE will use grant-management software to administer program; expenses are included for annual license for Years 1 & 2. RAE will host an all-day workshop for subawardees in Year 1; costs include meeting space, A/V, and coffee and lunch for approximately 20 participants. RAE will host an all-day SNEP Partners and Technology Transfer Meeting in Year 2; costs include meeting space, A/V, and coffee and lunch for approximately 100 meeting participants. RAE will produce in Year 2 a final report on results and lessons of first round of subawards and on outcomes of subawardee meeting and technology transfer meeting; budget includes costs for design, production, and printing of this report.

Subawards

RAE anticipates granting \$4,560,896 in subawards based on a \$5 million cooperative agreement, with payments to subawardees occurring in each of Year 1 and Year 2. This amount may be reduced if total cooperative agreement amount is reduced.

Indirect Charges

RAE will apply the 10% de minimis indirect expense rate to the total modified direct charges. This will be applied to the first \$25,000 of all subawards and contracts, and to the entirety of other direct expenses.

Cost share/match

Subaward awardees will be required to provide a 33% match to federal funds. This will total \$1,498,892 based on FY17 awarded funds of \$5 million. Subaward applicants will be required to include in their proposal the source, amount, and status of matching funds. The proposal scoring criteria will include additional points awarded for applicants who are able to provide matching funds in excess of the minimum requirement.

RAE will provide matching funds of \$10,000 per year to support the A-133 Single Audit that RAE will undergo to assure compliance with regulations and terms. Thus, ***total matching funds for FY17 awarded funds of \$5 million will be \$1,518,892, significantly exceeding the required amount of matching funds for this program.***

Role EPA funding will play in the overall project

EPA funding will provide a maximum of 75% of total funds to be used for subawarded projects under this program, with required subawardee matching funds providing at least 33% of the amount of the EPA contribution. EPA funding will provide a maximum of 77% of total funds for the overall project, with RAE matching funds and required subawardee matching funds providing at least a 30% match of the total EPA contribution.

Timely Expenditure of Grant Funds

RAE has nearly two decades of experience administering the expenditures of federal funds. We undergo a rigorous, organization-wide A-133 Single Audit which has continuously found our financial and governance policies and procedures sound and sufficient for the prevention of waste, fraud, and abuse of federal funds. The audit, conducted by an independent auditing firm, encompasses an examination of RAE's financial records, financial statements, federal award transactions and expenditures, the general management of our operations, internal control systems, and federal assistance. We maintain oversight of all of our subawardees through subrecipient monitoring including site visits, maintaining strict reporting procedures, and review of their financial policies and procedures. We closely coordinate with all subawardees to ensure that all projects are completed on budget and on time. All RAE subawardees are required to submit programmatic reports and financial reports on at least a semiannual basis; subawardees under this program will be required to submit quarterly reports. Subawardees will be paid on a reimbursable basis contingent upon receipt and approval of quarterly reports. To ensure timely closeout and reporting of results, projects funded under subawards will be required to be completed prior to six months before the end of the five-year project period. RAE has a proven track record of submitting all of our programmatic, financial, and final reports to the awarding agency on time.